

# The Kansas City War on Poverty

INSTITUTE  
FOR  
COMMUNITY  
STUDIES,  
INC.

(The opinions of  
the study are  
those of the  
Institute and not  
of the OEO.)

*The following excerpts were taken from a study conducted by the Institute for Community Studies, Kansas City, performed under contract for the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. The study evaluated the Community Action Program carried out by the Kansas City arm of the War on Poverty, the Human Resources Corporation. The study is published in two volumes, the first numbering 362 pages, the second consisting of supportive data, such as charts, profiles, tables, tabulations, etc. numbering 350 pages. The research encompasses every phase of the Kansas City war on poverty, from counting the number of people who visited what desk in what neighborhood centers to the image which various programs projected to the public.*

*The material presented here are excerpts, not a summary. As such it cannot fairly reflect the study, but it can show the intent and some of its conclusions. After reflecting upon the context of the Kansas City Community Action Program, the study offers a profile of the poor and then evaluates poverty intervention programs such as Neighborhood Service Centers, The Legal Services, Hope, Motivation for Teen-Age Girls, Upward Bound, Family Planning, Consumer Education, Fieldgoal, Work Experience, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Concentrated Employment Program. The study winds up with a discussion of the origins and implications of the dictum "maximum feasible participation."*

*Selections here are from the study of the poor, the Poverty Intervention Programs, the Legal Services, Upward Bound, Concentrated Employment Program, and the implications of "maximum feasible participation." Even these few topics are not fully presented. Topics such as Objectives, Design, Limitations of the Study, Research Assumptions, and others had to be omitted for the sake of brevity.*

*FOCUS/Midwest offers this material not in criticism of the Human Resources Corporation nor as an endorsement of the study, but only as information of great potential service to our readers. In many points we found ourselves in complete agreement with the evaluations, but had occasion to regret that the academic jargon employed moderated the pungency and the condemnation implied in the observations and conclusions offered. Kansas City is not unlike most urban communities, it is a city of two communities, the white and the black, the haves and the have nots, the compassionate and the aloof. Unless this economic and racist division is greatly reduced if not altogether eliminated, Kansas Cityans will continue to balance on the edge of a volcano which has erupted once and certainly will again and again and again.*

## Introduction

In the years since the initial forays of the War on Poverty, it has become increasingly clear that poverty in America is not only a complex problem, but also one that touches our most basic ideas about our society.

## Condition of Poverty

The literature on poverty intervention and research to the present gives strong evidence that, unless both action and research take into account the full meaning of the word poverty, little progress beyond the classification and treatment of the *symptoms* of poverty will be made. This is also what we have found in our studies in Kansas City. Adequate knowledge can be gained, and appropriate action taken, only to the extent that we understand that poverty is not merely one group's deviation from the normal pattern in the society. It is, rather, the condition that subordinate groups find themselves in, in their relationship to the dominant groups and institutions of the society.

## Issue of Poverty

The larger issue of poverty involves the distribution of resources in the society. The lower one's social position, the fewer resources one has at his command to use in pursuing upward mobility. Added to the differential distribution of resources — and their consequent accumulation at the top — is the increasing dependence on government for command over resources. Those with more resources are better able to employ them in maintaining their command over resources and, hence, their position.

The central issues of poverty concern those resources which are required for gaining or maintaining social position.

On the assumption that poverty is a problem of personal delinquency or cultural deviance, "human resources" investment programs which have constituted the general pattern of Community Action Program here, and elsewhere, have been designed to rescue the poor from their apathy and alienation by attempting to substitute motivation for opportunity. Programs have been aimed at improving mobility, rather than improving conditions. Present policy is centered on the requirement of getting the able-bodied to work. However, the largest segment of the poor does not consist of the employable, but is made up of the elderly and the disabled. For them, it is not a matter of employment opportunity but of improving conditions. For the employable, the key to program success is the matching of skill level of the population with the creation of enough jobs.

Our basic assumption has been, and still is, that the individual — whether he be a staff member or a participant — functions within a situation in which the social meanings, the boundaries, and the options available for action are determined by the interaction of a variety of forces. Individual motivation and competence are only a part of this situation.

This leads to our second basic assumption which was stated earlier: "poverty is a matter of relative deprivation and inequality". Programs which are directed only toward changing individuals in poverty can be expected to achieve solutions for some individual cases — not solutions to the social problem.

Our final assumption — or more accurately, bias — was that we, as a research team, held the same desires for success in the "War on Poverty" and experienced the same frustrations with its errors, its slowness, its small share among national priorities, as did the staff of the Human Resources Corporation (HRC).

The design for evaluation of the CAP incorporated four major components: (1) to systematically identify the poor in Kansas City and the conditions most problematic for them; (2) to evaluate the OEO-funded efforts to reduce poverty in Kansas City; (3) to consider the implications and consequences of the attempt to involve the poor in those efforts through mechanisms of participation; and (4) to analyze the impact of the Kansas City CAP on the existing network of social service agencies in terms of their relations with one another and with their clients.

For obvious reasons, the Civil Rights Movement, the "racial ferment," the riot of a year ago, taken together, form one of the most salient elements in the CAP environment in this community. From the perspective of much of the community, poverty and race are almost synonymous, although statistically they are not coterminous.

Approximately 100,000 Negroes live within the city limits of Kansas City, Missouri, most of them in the inner-city where tradition, economics, habit and discrimination wall them in. Approximately 20 per cent of Kansas City's population is black, but the percentage is increasing as whites move to the suburbs to escape ever-rising taxes, urban blight, crowdedness, noise, and integration.

The relationship between Negroes and whites in Kansas City has traditionally been one of surface tranquility with white-designated Negro spokesmen — usually ministers — and with pervasive institutional discrimination. Whereas prejudice in the South is built around the carefully formulated racist doctrine of white supremacy, the lingering discrimination of Kansas City is covert and largely devoid of any philosophical justification.

A golf course in 1939, a swimming pool and the Municipal Auditorium in 1951 — these were the first public accommodations to be opened to Kansas City Negroes. Restaurants followed in 1960, and in 1964 — by a margin of 1,614 votes out of nearly 90,000 — all public accommodations (except barber and beauty shops) were opened without regard to race. The legal efforts of the NAACP, plus the political reality of an increasing Negro population, had been the two factors largely responsible for those developments. However, courtroom deliberations and political dealings are not highly visible activities; thus, the larger community — black and white — remained virtually oblivious of the struggle taking place. This lack of visibility has been partially responsible for the increasing militancy of the Kansas City Negro community.

The job situation for Kansas City Negroes has visibly, though perhaps not significantly, changed since 1940. Major employers now actively seek Negro employees for upper echelon positions. The trade unions in Kansas City have changed little from their 1940 posture. Negroes are still largely denied apprenticeship training and union status. In terms of businesses owned and operated by Negroes, there is little reason to believe that the situation is more promising today than it was thirty years ago.

"It can't happen here" used to be the complacent retort to anyone raising the question of racial violence in Kansas City. But six days in April 1968 changed that. What began on April 9 as a march by students in memory of Martin Luther King passed quickly into a confrontation between young blacks and the police, and ended as a full scale riot in which six people (all black) were killed and in which over \$900,000 in property damage occurred.

Since the event, an increasing militancy has developed in the black community. The Black Panthers, Soul, Inc., United Soul, The Committee of Twenty, and other organizations of young blacks may not be representative of the total Negro community, but their activities have captured the attention of whites, and the admiration of some other blacks, thus giving "the race problem" a completely new context.

In addition to these newly-emerged, more militant organizations, Kansas City has long had an active NAACP, CORE, and Urban League. These organizations all played prominent roles in efforts over the past twenty years to desegregate public facilities and to secure jobs and training for blacks. A Negro political organization, Freedom, Inc., was begun in 1960 to weld the Negro community into a political force and to break the grip of white-controlled political machines which delivered the Negro vote for its own benefit. Freedom, Inc. has been successful in electing Negro State legislators, City councilmen, a county clerk and various ward chairmen.

Another large Negro organization also deserves mention. The Council for United Action (CUA) was



## Design of the Evaluation

## The Kansas City Civil Rights Movement

## Employment and Unions

## Activist Organizations

funded by better than \$20,000 from the Catholic, Presbyterian and Episcopal churches. Organized in Kansas City in late 1965 by Saul Alinsky's Chicago-based Industrial Areas Foundation, the CUA attempted to organize "people power" around issues identified by the poor.

After three years of largely unsuccessful efforts to evoke opposition from City Hall, from the Welfare Department, and from the police, CUA funding expired and Alinsky left in early 1968 saying that the poor, and Kansas City as a whole, were too complacent and the issues were not clearly enough focused. The April riot was to provide a graphic, but somewhat temporary, exception to his statement.

Before the riot, conservative whites dismissed Negroes as inferior and contented to live off welfare, while liberal whites expressed bewilderment at the lack of appreciation for their efforts. Whites, in general, tended to place the question of housing, education, and employment for the poor — particularly Negroes — low on the City's list of priorities. Despite the riots, the increasing black militancy, and visibly worse relations between the races, these priorities seem to have changed little — if at all.

## Financing

Kansas City voters recently approved bonds for a \$42-million sports stadium complex, but rejected an increased school levy and bond program. After three submissions to the voters, and a reduction in the amount requested, the school levy (but not the bonds) finally passed. The School District will have to operate in 1969-70 with some \$3 million less than the year before. Approximately 250 teaching positions have been cut, summer school has been drastically reduced, and most supplementary and enrichment programs have been abandoned. All these changes, of course, affect the inner-city schools much more immediately and significantly than the outlying ones, since inner-city facilities and programs have not been developed on a par with those in the rest of the system.

A condition which further aggravates Kansas City's problems is the existing conflict between local and State government. Although half of the State's four and a half million people live in St. Louis and Kansas City, political power at the State level is still wielded by rural legislators. As a result, Kansas City has been unable to secure adequate State legislation to aid in its financial crisis.

## The Churches

Official Kansas City takes pride in its many religious institutions. Until recently, however, these religious organizations, like those across the nation, devoted little of their resources to urban problems. Occasionally congregations abandoned their inner-city churches to the expanding Negro population while seeking to continue their traditional ministries in more congenial areas of the City or the suburbs.

## Poverty Intervention Programs

Programmatic solutions to poverty consist of: (1) transfer payment programs, and (2) programs for education, job training and placement. The poverty population in Kansas City can be viewed on the basis of these two solutions.

Our analyses of individual intervention programs in Kansas City reveal a distinct pattern of action. While a wide variety in amount of resources committed to programs was found, along with differences in immediate program goals, each of the programs adhered to the same basic model of poverty intervention. The lack of skills, motivation, mobility aspiration, and other attributes are considered to be the conditions that inhibit satisfactory economic performance. OEO programs have, as implemented in Kansas City, endeavored to alleviate the condition of poverty by attempting to implant in the poor those attributes necessary for economic performance.

It may be, however, that in adopting this approach, the Human Resources Corporation (HRC) failed to allow for complexity. Poverty in America is a problem of relative deprivation of access to the minimum socially acceptable *standard* of living, *and* of access to the *resources* necessary for the *attainment of that minimum standard of living*.

## Neighborhood Centers in Kansas City

The Neighborhood Centers were designed to: "assist residents in seeking adequate employment . . .," "provide supportive services . . . health, education, welfare, employment and other social services," and "... the Neighborhood Center should be the focal point for community action and community involvement."

The Neighborhood Centers were to be established as multi-purpose centers carrying a wider range of social services than the currently existing neighborhood centers. They were to provide for the decentralization of services, in order to make them available and more visible in the areas where the need was presumed to be greatest. Moreover, they were to be capable of an aggressive out-reach program to bring the people of the community into contact with services appropriate to their needs.

A primary justification for the Neighborhood Center concept was the accessibility of services, both in geographical terms and in the sense that a number of different services could be housed and co-ordinated at the same place for the community resident who was faced with a number of problems. While the Centers provided some additional services relatively close to the residents, such as education, recreation, and employment counseling, the scope and size of such services were quite limited. In short, the multi-purpose service concept of the Neighborhood Center was greater than the capacity of the financial resources made available to HRC.

In fact, since the preceding observations were made, a number of services available through the Neighborhood Centers have been reduced or phased out altogether. For example, the Planned Parenthood

and Legal Aid Programs have cut back their Neighborhood Center offices in order to utilize more adequate facilities in the general area and maximize the efficient use of limited staffs. Other locally initiated programs, such as Consumer Education, were victims of a tightened budget and a growing tendency by Congress and OEO to "earmark" funds for specified programs, e.g., Headstart, summer recreation, Legal Aid and Family Planning.

The most obvious solution to these circumstances is for Congress to provide a level of funding which would allow the anti-poverty agencies to provide, at the area level, a range of services proportionate to the size and needs of the poverty population.

Up to this time there is little evidence of any institutional change resulting from social action by Area residents. In fact, most of the Neighborhood Centers have experienced little success in organization of Area residents for action of any sort. This failure appears to have resulted from: (1) A lack of commitment to community organization. The HRC staff has been primarily oriented toward the delivery of services. (2) An ambiguous policy toward social action. Efforts by citizen groups to stimulate institutional change generally evoke the resistance of the target institution, and are controversial. HRC sponsorship of such activities is somewhat awkward since it is dependent on community institutions and agencies for official approval and financial support. (3) A lack of organizational expertise. Community organization efforts under various sponsorship (including an effort by Saul Alinsky's Council for United Action in Kansas City) have demonstrated the great complexity and difficulty of organizing the urban poor.

Several recommendations may be made at this point:

1. A greater commitment of staff and resources to community organization effort is needed.
2. In conjunction with the above recommendation, the Community Action Program should provide a certain proportion of the funds allotted to a community to be completely controlled by the Neighborhood Elected Boards, or other neighborhood organizations, to use in creating their own programs.
3. The Neighborhood Centers could also contribute to institutional change through social action by facilitating the efforts of independent organizations which are already active. For example:
  - (a) Neighborhood Workers should actively inform and refer community members to such action-oriented groups as tenant associations, civil rights groups, consumer action groups and national welfare rights organizations which are not at this time part of the Center programs.
  - (b) Neighborhood Workers should be allowed to work and participate in these groups themselves as part of their jobs.
  - (c) The offices and transportation facilities of the Centers should be made available to community action groups in supporting projects by them.

Poor people are prone to legal trouble. They are often defendants, rarely plaintiffs. They are bewildered by legalities they face daily as parents, consumers, tenants, recipients of public assistance, and accused offenders. If poverty itself is at the root of most of their legal troubles, their escape may lie, at least in part, in establishing legal rights that the landlord, the social agency, the neighborhood merchant, and the police will honor.

The law has long made an invidious distinction between the rich and the poor. Traditionally, society's attitude toward the provision of legal services to the indigent has been similar to its attitude toward other welfare programs. The courts seldom considered the rights of the person in need, and civil court proceedings often resembled criminal prosecutions.

The legal aid movement began during the latter part of the last century, as the legal problems of the poor began to be recognized and addressed. It was not until the 1920's and the publication of Reginald Heber Smith's *Justice and the Poor*, that the movement began to gather momentum. Under the impetus of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA), a private, nationwide organization, local legal aid societies began to furnish legal advice and representation to the poor. Such legal services were available only for civil cases, and only if the destitution of the potential client were such that private attorneys were not interested. Since then, public defender organizations have affiliated with the legal aid societies.

In 1964, OEO decided to include in CAP an expanded Legal Services Program which was to operate out of neighborhood law offices, provide counsel and representation to the poor, and seek to reform laws and institutions operating to their detriment.

The Legal Aid and Defender Society of Greater Kansas City was established early in 1965, as a private, non-profit corporation, "dedicated to the proposition that the economically depressed elements of the population of the Greater Kansas City area are in need of and are entitled to legal counseling and advice and that many persons are denied such counseling and advice because of their economic inability to employ private counsel." The Society is governed by a Board of Trustees composed of both laymen and lawyers.

In December 1964, the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association's National Defender Project, financed by the Ford Foundation Funds, approved a plan submitted by the Society to establish a model defenders office. With a three-year declining grant of \$153,000, the Society began operation in March 1965, when it received its first appointments in criminal cases from the Jackson County Circuit Court.

*Programs  
Reduced*



*Change  
Through  
Social  
Action*

**The  
Legal  
Services  
Program**

In May 1965, the Society's civil division was inaugurated and, the following month, contractual agreements with the City of Kansas City, Missouri, were completed, whereby the Society assumed responsibility for furnishing free legal service in civil matters to the indigent residents of Kansas City.

Upon activation of the civil division, the Kansas City Bar Association established a lawyer referral service which operated in conjunction with the civil division of the Legal Aid and Defender Society. Through this service, the Society was to direct an individual who did not qualify for free legal aid to a private attorney who would handle the matter, many times at a reduced fee.

Thus, the poor of Kansas City were not entirely without legal services prior to the establishment of the OEO Legal Services Program. These services, however, were offered on a much smaller scale and were directed primarily toward representation of the criminally accused, an area which the OEO program was not designed to handle.

In June 1966, the Society's proposal for expanded legal services was approved by OEO as a part of the War on Poverty in Kansas City. The objectives of the Program were described by the Legal Aid and Defender Society (1966) as follows:

- (1) to provide indigent individuals with more adequate legal services than they currently enjoy in our society;
- (2) to fashion a more favorable image of the legal process among the indigent;
- (3) to reduce the incidence of civil law violation through a program of preventive law counseling.

**Characteristics  
of  
Clients**

The majority of Legal Aid clients were white; 45 per cent were Negro.

It would appear that the Legal Aid clientele was racially different from the target population. Negroes were proportionately underrepresented in the client group. Even more indicative that the Legal Aid clientele was a somewhat selected population was the evidence that 56 per cent were employed. Over 80 per cent of the Legal Aid clients reported salaries and wages as the principal source of income for themselves or their families. Among the poor, only 32 per cent reported salaries and wages as a major income source. Only 5 per cent of all the clients received public assistance. Legal Aid clients were usually in the 20 to 40 year age group, somewhat younger than the average age of the poverty population. These comparisons, therefore, suggest that utilization of legal aid services was primarily the result of a process of selection which represented the higher income, employed groups in the target population — although all, of course, had been screened by eligibility criteria.

**Reputation  
Recommendations**

The Legal Services Program received more public criticism than most programs which operated under OEO in this community. It was charged that the Program had been insensitive to the needs of the poor.

At the present, the Program has one Negro lawyer — the Executive Director. His appointment seemed to silence most of the objections to the Program in the target areas. However, he has been unable to secure other Negro attorneys for staff positions. The reason he cites for this problem — as well as the fairly high turnover of staff — is salaries.

Not all the problems inherent in the organization of a legal service system have been fully resolved. It can be safely assumed that the processes which have resulted — up to now — in a selective recruitment of clientele have not yet fully uncovered the total legal needs of the poor.

Nor has the task of legal reform been completed. Much of this effort is dependent upon overcoming inertia toward the rewriting or codifying of law, or upon the time-consuming process of developing test cases for court judgments. Similarly, efforts to revise the legal system, as it engages in discriminatory practices, require continuous advocacy for the rights of the poor.

A significant task also remains to improve the organization of services for individual clients. This includes the following specifics:

- (1) Better salaries and more prestige for lawyers who enter these kinds of programs.
- (2) More desirable program image. Such a practice could be called "community" law, thus freeing the attorney and those who use his services of the mutually unattractive "poverty" designation.
- (3) More vigorous and systematic recruitment of legal services' staff from law schools and firms.
- (4) More emphasis in the education of lawyers on class rather than case law and on law reform as well as enforcement.
- (5) More leadership from the local, state and national bar associations.
- (6) More sympathetic treatment by the mass media of the legal needs of the poor and the programs designed to remedy them.
- (7) More emphasis in program operation on developing new community law and new community legal services.

**Upward  
Bound**

Upward Bound is an education program. It is aimed at a small, selected number of the poor. It shares with other educational programs the premise that more and better education is an effective, as well as an efficient, way to make the poor non-poor and permanently so.

Participants are almost necessarily the students with histories of unrewarding experiences in educational institutions. Perhaps because an academic setting similar to the one with which such students have had previous experience might operate against the desired change in motivation, the eventual Program



format called for: (1) a summer program involving residency on a college campus; and (2) an academic year program (also operating from the sponsoring university) which offered supplemental classes once a week and some tutorial assistance per student need.

The Program also calls for the inclusion of appropriate and available recreational and cultural enrichment activities. From the perspective of the on-going Program, the tutor-counselor (an undergraduate student with a background similar to the backgrounds of participants) has numerous, important duties to perform in order for the operation to run smoothly. He is a liaison person for participants and faculty, providing them with feedback; a role model for participants of the "typical college student;" a tutor for student participants; and a general agent for coordination and continuity of staff, participant and general program activities.

Specifically, from entrance into the Program, participants are co-determiners both of the areas in which they need assistance and of the materials and activities which will best compensate or supplement (mutually identified) academic weaknesses. In principle, this technique of involving the student in the development of his own curriculum reflects a belief that an academic program which is adapted to the interests of the student is an excellent device for generating motivation on the part of the student.



## Recommendations

Upward Bound was designed to help move a number of socially and economically disadvantaged high school students into and through college. Necessarily, this evaluation has dealt primarily with the first part of this two-pronged aim.

Several hypotheses were stated which predicted that students in Upward Bound could be distinguished from their matched controls who had not participated in the Program, according to several different variables. These dimensions were: high school GPA, teacher ratings, standardized achievement test scores, high school completion, college entrance, and first semester college attrition rates.

These hypotheses were not confirmed. For the most part, participants' high school GPA's did not improve significantly, their teacher ratings did not change essentially, and their achievement test scores were not much different subsequent to participation. On the critical variable of high school completion, the control group graduated 16 per cent more than did the participant group. While both groups had slightly less than 50 per cent enter college, the entrance of participants was significant of the .10 level. Once in college, the control group again kept a greater per cent in college by the end of the first semester, although both groups had in excess of 80 per cent retention. College attrition was not significant for participants and controls.

A series of hypotheses were derived, assuming variations within the Upward Bound participant group. These concerned: (1) high school completion; (2) college entrance; and (3) college attrition. The hypotheses predicting variations by length of time in the Program were confirmed. Those in the Program for three years had exceptionally high proportions finishing high school, entering college and staying in college. The hypothesis suggesting college attrition for participants would be low if they attended the Upward Bound host institution was supported, as was the hypothesis that participants who are the only Upward Bound participant in a given college will have higher attrition than will participants who are clustered in a college.

Taken together, these findings suggest: (1) Upward Bound does not significantly change students' performance in high school; (2) it does not affect participants' dropping out of high school; (3) it does succeed in contributing to a significant number of the eligible participants enrolling in college; but (4) once in college, attrition is not significantly different for participant and control groups. These findings plus the emergence of a Transitional Year Program indicate that, while Upward Bound does serve a critical function, i.e., it gets participants into college, it is unable to adequately compensate for the educational needs of disadvantaged students. It appears that such students need further assistance and certainly so in the first year of college. Perhaps to be quite realistic, it should be recognized that many of such students will need educational assistance throughout their college years. In this perspective, Upward Bound can only be a part of the solution rather than a total panacea. As a part rather than the whole solution, Upward Bound should address itself to students in high school and the increasingly difficult problem of keeping them there until they graduate. This, unfortunately, appears to be a problem area for both the Kansas City Upward Bound programs but one which critically needs attention.

## Concentrated Employment Program

The Concentrated Employment Program (CEP) is an extension of the "human resources" approach to poverty intervention. Thus, the Program was to provide counseling, testing, medical, legal, social work, training, and placement services in order to locate program enrollees in appropriate positions in the mainstream of the economy.

The Concentrated Employment Program endeavored to provide employment opportunity to the poor unemployed and underemployed residents of the Kansas City poverty areas. Its success was limited more by the context in which it had to operate than by program attributes. Financial and inter-organizational structures prevented the full concentration of effort needed. On the whole, income and socio-economic status of participants were raised. But in the context of the size of participants families, their poverty was not, in our opinion, adequately alleviated. This was not due to the Concentrated Employment Program itself, however. The meager availability of good jobs of non-poverty wages, and the paucity of training for the upgrading of skills provided by component programs to meet the requirements of non-poverty jobs

limited success more than any direct inadequacy of performance on the part of CEP.

These conclusions portend certain suggestions regarding the basic structures of the Program and its environment. It seems that the Concentrated Employment Program maximized benefits for participants within the framework of the present structure of the job market in Kansas City. But these benefits will continue to be severely limited until the basic issues of defects in the job market itself are dealt with. Education and training are unequally distributed; access to available positions is limited by that inequality, as well as others. Short-term "training" programs, however well operated, will not be able to fully compensate for such inequalities. Employment programs must be designed either to train people sufficiently to provide access to quality employment, or to alter the labor market to reduce inequality. Even then, success will depend on the extent to which existing institutions provide the services to the children of the poor, that are already available to the children of the affluent.

Even though work training programs can never fully compensate for unequal distribution of education and other resources related to occupational success, they *can* make the difference between poverty and a decent living, *if* they are full scale efforts. Up to now, national programs for poverty reduction have had to operate under either considerable attack, or large-scale inertia, and consequently under financial limitations. The issue, then, is not whether CEP was effective (it was, within the limits imposed upon it), but whether the priorities of this country are set according to the needs of the people for a quality of life which provides more than bare subsistence or poverty level existence. The Concentrated Employment Program *could* have been a major success, if it had been given the power and the resources to fully carry out its mission.

"Maximum  
Feasible  
Participation"  
Origins  
and  
Implications

The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 contains a clause which has had important consequence for the structure and processes of community action programs. The law states that a community action program "is developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served."

The theoretical and political antecedents of this clause are derived from at least two distinct orientations. The first stems from American political ideology, which places high value on democratic procedures and decision-making. Yet the recognition of the "right" of low-income groups to be included in the policy-making structures of agencies and institutions whose programs and services affect them is a relatively recent addition to the norms of the American political ethos and remains an issue of considerable contention.

The second theoretical antecedent of the "maximum feasible participation" clause is the assertion that such participation contributes to the effectiveness of change programs and to the motivation of the participants.

The entire process by which "maximum feasible participation" has come to be defined as an operating criterion can best be viewed as an emergent social phenomenon. Although introduced into the structure of the poverty program as a mandate of the Economic Opportunity Act, the phenomenon cannot be fully described and understood without viewing it in the context of time and place.

On October 5, 1964, the Human Resources Corporation was formed. Fourteen months later, on December 21, 1965, HRC voted to disband and to withdraw the two and one-quarter million dollar program package submitted to OEO for funding two months earlier. The demise of the Corporation so soon after its birth, and before the achievement of its goals, was due largely to the inability of various interest groups to agree on how the poor should be involved in the War on Poverty.

The Human Resources Corporation was incorporated with a Board of four members. No one who qualified as poor, according to OEO guidelines, was a member of the Board until June 29, 1965 — eight months after it was formed. This issue was first raised on April 20, 1965, when the Board was told by OEO that it was insisting that the poor be represented on governing bodies of Community Action Programs or otherwise be clearly and definitely brought into the planning of the programs.

It soon became evident that problems of representation had not been fully resolved. In an effort to reconcile the differences which had become apparent, the Director of HRC appointed the entire group of 16 nominees from the Citizens Alliance as an advisory body, "The Inner City Technical Advisory Panel."

It intensified the developing conflict which ultimately led to the break-up of the Board.

Two months after the Board was disbanded (February 1966), a new one was formed by City and County officials, after discussion with various welfare, political, and civil rights organizations. Agreeing to hold an election for the purpose of providing representative participation of the community, HRC — with special funds from OEO — drew up plans for an elaborate campaign, recruited candidates, and established procedures. This first election, the most successful of all which were eventually held, resulted in the selection of seven representatives to sit with 21 appointed members on the second Human Resources Corporation Board.

In July 1968, the HRC Board was expanded to 39 members and was reorganized in compliance with the 1967 Green Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act. This amendment required that the Board be composed of the following: one-third public officials (either elected or appointed); one-third representatives of the major groups and interests in the community, e.g., business, labor, religion, education; and one-third elected representatives of the areas to be served.

In addition to representation on the policy-making Board of HRC, additional units were set up to provide a wider base for participation within the overall structure. These included the Area Advisory Boards, the Citizens' Assemblies, the Council of Elected Board Members, and advisory boards of delegate agencies.

The formal structure and recruitment strategies of HRC provided a base for participation. It has been shown that it was not always organizationally efficient and often less than satisfactory to individual participants. Yet, it provided opportunity for dissent within the structure, although dissent was not always effective in producing the desired changes. More recently, participation in CAP has been broadened from unanticipated sources of opposition and confrontation from outside the structure.

In 1966, the Alinsky organized Council for United Action had run a slate of candidates for the Neighborhood Elected Board in Area II, but had been unsuccessful. Existing civil rights organizations such as NAACP, CORE, Urban League, Mexican-American Alliance for Progress, were represented on the HRC Board by their leadership. It was not until after the Kansas City riot in April 1968 that organizations such as the Black Panthers, Soul, Inc., and other "militant" groups were organized, and the Social Action Committee of Twenty and other previously existing organizations assumed a more militant posture.

Militants have disrupted poverty program meetings with increasing frequency over the past 12 to 15 months. During the first year and a half of the program there was little of such activity, as the young black males tended either to ignore the program or to seek, sometimes successfully, funding for special projects such as the Community Youth Patrol, job training, and food distribution.

The most frequent charges leveled by the young militants are that the programs are inadequate or poorly run and that the poor, particularly the youths, are not represented on the various Boards comprising the HRC structure. This criticism has not been without effect on the elected poverty representatives. They, too, have become more outspoken and critical than was true during the first two years of the program. This is undoubtedly due, in part, to their greater sophistication and frustration over the first two years, but more immediately to the activities of the militants. While the militant position may be seen as a threat to their legitimacy by the elected poverty leaders, it is also an implicit show of support for actions some have wanted but feared to take.

At the very time many of the elected representatives are asking themselves by what authority the militants act, they are hearing for the first time from their communities. If it is not *the* voice of the community, it is at least a voice. And for the first time, the representatives of the poor are accountable to a flesh and blood reality rather than a statistical category.

Several generalizations can be drawn from the experience of the Kansas City CAP. The structural devices which were established here, although they had obvious flaws, provided for an experiment in citizen participation.\*The first generalization is that the social meaning of participation is not "to advise." To advise, but to be unable to see any visible evidence that "advice" has been accepted, is not meaningful participation. Participation then becomes a "front," a "rubber stamp." Consequently, the issue is participation itself and a quest for control, or for the symbols of control. The larger issues of the "War on Poverty," the attainment of organizational goals, then are at the least, secondary.

The Kansas City CAP during the time of our observations has been faced with this problem. It has not yet been fully resolved. It has tried to separate the conflict for organizational power from the problem of developing a viable program; considering the former merely a matter of proportionate representation and board membership, and the latter a professional task. This attempt to separate the two has not been successful, because from the beginning, central to the issue of power has been the issue of control of program development. This attempted separation of board-staff function has placed the staff in a position of becoming the most immediate and visible block to the achievement of control by the poor.

A second conclusion drawn from the Kansas City CAP experience with citizen participation relates to the ability of the CAP organization to engage in social action. CAP cannot be viewed apart from the context of the civil rights movement and the form in which it has evolved in the community. Given the existence of a plurality of social activist groups in the community, CAP might consider the social action arena preempted. Or, CAP might view social activism as incompatible with its own service orientation. In either case, it should be remembered that the HRC structure involves a sharing of power between at least three identifiable groups: the "poor;" local government and civic interest groups; and the professionals. This does not necessarily preclude social action on all issues but it places certain constraints on which issues can be identified as of concern to this organization. And, it makes the more conservative self-help and traditional community organization activities more acceptable strategies.

However, issues of social action strategy have never fully emerged in this community. Not only have the usual difficulties of creating a "grass roots" base been present, but the focus of participation of the poor has been within the organization. The dominant issues have been those of organizational control and the effort has been on the emergence of a workable definition of sharing organizational power. Although participation by the poor in programs such as CAP — and more recently, Model Cities — would appear to be an accepted organizational requirement and one which is in accord with American political ideology, it is still an unresolved issue. ◀



**Organized  
Opposition:  
A  
Form  
of  
Participation**

**The  
Kansas  
City  
Human  
Resources  
Corporation**

**Power  
vs  
Program**



*Chicago:  
A Victim  
of its  
Own Success*

*(continued from page 13)*



can, and they are replaced just as fast by poor people attracted from rural areas by better paying jobs and higher welfare payments available in the city.

Thus, its citizens become increasingly lower income and black, heightening tensions between captive whites and blacks who cannot move to the suburbs, and widening the economic and racial chasm between city and suburb.

The central city, once home to the most urbane population and to decision-makers in our national life, is becoming the home of the least urbane and the most impotent. It cannot provide decent public education or even physical security to its inhabitants. Chicago is fading away as a center of middle-class population even though the city has been the recipient of spectacular amounts of public and private improvements which have given the city a complete face lifting.

The city is no longer attractive to the middle-class family because the once present sense of community identity and pride has been eroded by the increasing impotence of local people and local decision-makers. Their impotence has developed through the processes already described — the city government has lost taxing and other powers to larger governments; local community groups have lost power to city government because of the much greater role of government in community affairs; the economic decision-makers have moved from the city to the suburbs; many of the newcomers to the city have become wards of local government as recipients of public housing and welfare.

The reason that our local archaic and fragmented governments have not completely broken down is that Mayor Daley has been able, through his skills and power, to reconcile conflicting political interests and provide metropolitan leadership. As both mayor of Chicago and leader of the Cook County Democratic Party, he has wielded his skill and power so as to render him power and influence broker for the entire county. In a sense, he has served as a surrogate for metropolitan government. But Mayor Daley is not going to last forever, and he has already lost some of his trading power because of his shift from a policy of consensus to one of confrontation.

Mayor Daley's appeal to independent and Republican voters who live in outlying wards and suburbs was based on his image as an efficient, noncontroversial, "good government" city manager type. Before 1968, Mayor Daley was able to maintain a posture of serene neutrality, while his co-opted agents in and out of government debated civic issues. In those days, the mayor would never commit himself to any policy whatsoever until he absolutely had to.

After 1965, civic issues like schools, black militancy and safe streets became too hot, however, and one after another of the mayor's co-opted agents left town. With no one left to act as buffer, Mayor Daley abandoned his policy of consensus in reaction to the race and peace riots of 1968 and became a strong law and order advocate.

By becoming controversial, the mayor certainly reinforced the allegiance of a majority of the city's white voters. But he alienated hundreds of thousands of loyal black voters who decided to sit out the 1968 elections. He also lost the support of many independent and Republican voters. He now faces, for the first time, rebellious Democratic suburban committeemen and an antagonistic Republican governor. His future role as metropolitan power

broker will certainly suffer as a consequence of these changes.

## **To Consolidate Fragmented Suburban Government**

Suburban government has its problems, too. The great attraction of the suburb is that it is smaller and can supply the lost sense of community. The suburb has much greater control over its destiny. Its economic base is as diversified as that of the metro area to which its residents commute. Its municipal government, its school board, its zoning board, and other community agencies are directly responsive to the interest, support and participation of the people they serve.

To be efficient, of course, the suburban unit of government should serve at least 25,000 people to provide a minimum threshold for such services as a high school, and a fire and police protection area. Furthermore, such suburban units should be connected through functional metropolitan agencies to regional services such as water supply, sanitation, air and water pollution control, forest preserves, and hospital and university districts.

Finally, some property tax pooling and greatly increased state and federal subsidies must be provided to help equalize local resources without destroying local initiative and incentive. Specifically, non-residential property, the unequal distribution of which results in tremendous disparities in tax rates and fiscal resources, should be pooled at the township or county level.

## **Break Up Chicago into 44 Suburbs Increase Political Participation**

A new kind of metropolitan government should be created in Chicago, bringing the suburbs to Chicago rather than bringing the city to the suburbs. Chicago should be divided into the 44 suburbs that it once was, and small suburbs should be merged into agglomerations of 25,000 plus population. Then people on the Near North Side, and a dozen other Chicago communities, who have the same income, interests, and racial mix as residents of Evanston, could aspire to develop a school system similar to that of Evanston, rated as one of the five best in the United States, rather than being satisfied with the slum schools they now have.

The resulting 100 or so community governments would be tied to the metropolitan-wide special function agencies described earlier. Local tax control would increase local interest and initiative, while the pooling of non-residential taxes and the input of state and federal equalizing grants would assure minimum standards of service in all communities.

County-wide government would make the racist vote less crucial since neither the black nor the white ghetto can dominate county-wide elections for at least one, perhaps two generations. Effective neighborhood control or influence in community affairs would permit more democratic participation and would relieve our city officials of the burden of supporting one ghetto against another.

County government with strong neighborhood councils should also help redress the enormous inequities of community services, particularly in the fields of education and housing.

Local government and private market forces have seemingly conspired to exploit with a vengeance the greater propensities toward economic and racial segregation that result from population growth, income gains and racism.

Stronger county control of local urban development programs, such as education, housing and health, and the effective participation of neighborhood groups, are recommended in our study as the best way in which we can reconcile

divisive local interests which conflict with the metropolitan interest. Such a combination of county-metropolitan neighborhood government partnership could result in the definition of three metropolitan interests:

- 1) maintaining the economic efficiency of the urban system;
- 2) guaranteeing minimum standards of community services; and
- 3) achieving a semblance of democratic society in community life.

When would such a reorganization of metropolitan political life be feasible? It should have taken place many years ago. Probably, we have another ten years of grace, beyond which time we will have political and social revolt in Chicago if no change is made. We will probably need every one of these ten years because metropolitan reorganization based on community participation would be considered sheer heresy by the older generation of local politicians — both city and suburban. A few more repetitions of civil disturbances of the kind we had in the summer of 1966 and in the spring and summer of 1968 may bring forth a new generation of politicians who will repudiate obsolete and feudalistic forms of political organization and ideology.

### A "New" Mayor Daley?

What is the present outlook for a change in leadership in the Democracy of Chicago and Cook County? There has been a long period of mutual recrimination in the many debates following convention week and most recently animating the "7" Conspiracy trial. Although there is still an overwhelming political aura of unreconstructed bigotry on the question of racial justice and dissent, there are also some positive signs that lessons have been learned from the tragic confrontations of August 1966 and August 1968. Because of the nature of the power structure in Chicago, this could only mean that Mayor Daley himself is pondering what has happened.

*The first indication of lessons learned was the passage, May 14, 1969, by unanimous vote, of a resolution in the City Council, urging the withdrawal of American armed forces from Viet Nam, the very article of faith that had united dissenters at the time of the convention. Also on May 14, the section of the Municipal Code of Chicago relating to parade and assembly permits was substantially amended and liberalized. One month later, on June 10, Mayor Daley urged the direct election of convention delegates before the McGovern commission on broadening citizen participation in Democratic Party affairs. In December 1969, Mayor Daley approved of Adlai Stevenson III, as the party candidate to contest the Senate seat presently held by Republican Ralph Smith. (Thus, the top Democratic standard bearer is the man who, in September 1968, rapped the city administration's handling of convention week disorders, and criticized the state Democratic Party for having a "feudal structure," being intolerant of new ideas and forces, and unresponsive to young people, suburbanites, and blacks.)*

In his own public utterances, Mayor Daley is paying new lip service, especially since January 1970, to the causes of students, dissenters, and civil rights. A few samplers from a January 23, 1970 speech are:

*On Youth:* "The youth question why a nation which can land on the moon, cannot clear a slum, end a war, erase discrimination, and do it right now. We must enlist the enthusiasm and idealism of young people."

*On Civil Rights:* "Our priorities must stem from the aspirations of blacks and other minorities. We must end racism. We must erase the intolerable discrimination which denies opportunity and dignity because of a man's color."

*On Viet Nam:* "There must be an end to the Viet Nam war.

Not only to end killing and destruction but because the \$80 billion we spend for defense is a waste of resources, a misallocation of our wealth and the prime cause of inflation."

It may be that Richard Daley now can speak like Abbie Hoffman not because he is a Yippie convert but because he does not mind raising issues that are now the burden of a *Republican* national administration. This new rhetoric must also be balanced against the city administration's continuing efforts, in the "7" Conspiracy trial, to justify its actions and policies during convention week by discrediting political dissent. Stevenson may be the Democratic Senatorial candidate more because he is the party's best vote-getter than for his liberal views. Albeit, officials who steal causes and lines from the SDS and who support people like Stevenson offer refreshing hope for the acceptance of new political ideas and accommodations that metropolitan survival will require.

Another important development is that Chicago's administration must now deal with an unfriendly state and federal administration. This change has already substantially cut the flow of state and federal funds to Chicago. But more important, Mayor Daley no longer gets *carte blanche* from Springfield and Washington. Local administration of federally funded programs now undergoes more than token scrutiny. HUD and HEW have threatened cutbacks in funds for schools, medical assistance, housing, and model cities if federal requirements with respect to desegregation, minority rights, and citizen participation are not met. Whether by coincidence or not, the Justice Department and the federal courts are also taking a closer look at the local operations of federal programs. In July 1969, Federal District Court Judge Richard Austin ruled that three of every four new units of public housing must be built in a white area. In March 1969, Assistant Attorney General Jerris Leonard ordered his department's civil rights division to concentrate its compliance investigations on Chicago, a city he termed "the most segregated in the United States." The Justice Department's first school desegregation suit outside of the South was filed in April 1968 against South Holland elementary school district in South Cook County, and a desegregation plan was ordered by District Court Judge Julius Hoffman a year later. The Justice Department is threatening a similar suit against the Chicago Board of Education if a satisfactory desegregation plan is not worked out for that city.

Chicago's original formula for "widespread citizen participation" in the model cities program was the most restrictive of any of the 150 Model Cities in the nation. Other cities implemented the broad federal guidelines by electing rather than selecting Model Area Planning Council representatives, giving the citizen groups the veto power and the right to hire and fire staff. Chicago citizens had none of these rights. After lengthy debate with HUD, citizen groups, and liberal aldermen, Mayor Daley compromised in the spring of 1969 by allowing half the planning council representatives to be elected and by granting the councils a greater decision-making role.

Perhaps the combination of pressures from dissenters, liberals, citizen groups, the press, and the state and federal administration may foster a greater measure of democracy in the Democracy of Chicago and Cook County. ◀

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# St. Louis Cannot and Will Not Finance Its Public Schools / GARY TOBIN

The St. Louis public school system is one of the poorest in the nation with no bright prospect for any solution. The poverty of the schools is rooted in the poverty of the city itself: another aspect of municipal incapability to deal with its problems. Inevitably, most city problems today assume a racial overtone, and this is also apparent in the financial crisis of the St. Louis schools.

The present financial dilemma has its roots in two decades of massive population change. In twenty years St. Louis has grown from 18 per cent black to over 40 per cent black. Today, the Blacks are pushed together in an amorphous ghetto and they constitute the largest racial, ethnic, or religious group in the city.

White Catholic centers add a second ghetto to the city's residential patterns. The Germans and Italians reside in multiple enclaves throughout much of the remainder of the city. These two groups are predominantly Catholic, which brings the city's Catholic population to about 30 per cent.

Along with the black growth has come an exodus of white wealth and industry into St. Louis County. This decentralization has eroded the tax base from which the schools derive their income while educational needs have continued to skyrocket.

Between 1947 and 1959 school enrollment grew by 10,000 and between 1959 and 1969 another 10,000 students enrolled in the St. Louis schools. Budget costs increased over *four times* in those twenty-two years. *Yet, the total assessed property value in 1967 was only \$1,745,163,440, a growth of less than one per cent from 1950 and not enough to finance adequate education.*

Black students make up most of the enrollment increase. White St. Louisans have never been willing to provide a quality education for black children. When integration was ordered in 1954, whites were obligated to provide more equally for black and white education. However, rather than support an increasingly black school system or send their children to an integrated school, many whites moved to the county. Most of those who stayed voted against school taxes and bonds.

## The City's Campaign for the Tax Dollar

The flight to the suburbs has forced city officials to place priority on attracting industry and high income whites back into St. Louis. To stimulate this movement, city government set two policies. Large areas are cleared, and then the land is used for highways, industrial parks, and urban renewal, displacing many low income families, mostly black. The city does not replace adequate amounts of low income housing either by building public housing or encouraging private development. Displaced ghetto residents are, therefore, forced to find new housing within their limited means outside of the neighborhoods in which they lived. Hence city urban renewal projects contribute

instability to the ghetto community and create new slums in marginal areas.

The priority given by city officials to highways and industrial improvements — irrespective of their long-term benefits — takes funds away from fighting poverty. The city's neglect of poverty areas and its disruption of black neighborhoods have served to perpetuate low election turnouts by preventing the formation of strong community associations or destroying those that already exist. In turn, neighborhood instability and poverty, among other factors, have been responsible for low black turnouts at municipal elections.

The success of the St. Louis educational system is traditionally dependent upon strong public support at school tax and bond elections. But, on the one hand, the polarization of the city population has produced a drastic drop in white voter support; and, on the other hand, although eighty per cent of all Blacks who vote support submitted proposals, poverty and unstable neighborhoods help keep black turnouts the lowest in the city — much too low to offset negative white votes — placing the entire school system in jeopardy. The polarity of support and turnout is the root of the St. Louis school crisis.

## Past Policy of Minimum Education Backfires

The importance of school tax and bond successes can only be realized when considering the extent to which the educational system of St. Louis has depended upon public support at every school election. Since the turn of the century, in comparison to other cities in the United States, St. Louis made only an average effort to provide public education. White citizens demanded no more than a mediocre level of education; the school board fell in line, void of any initiative to find new resources.

The St. Louis schools were kept in operation through a policy of crisis financing — only when an emergency arose did the school board approach the public for additional funds. Thus the schools were kept in a state of imminent financial danger, constantly threatened that new expenditures might come up which could be made only by taking funds from other essential budget items, thereby reducing the mediocre quality of the schools to an unsatisfactory level.

By waiting until the last possible moment before seeking necessary revenues, the school board relied upon the community's willingness to approve *every* school tax or bond proposal the first time it was submitted.

The citizens of St. Louis did respond to all the board's appeals until after World War II. Since the war and the population upheaval that followed, however, the school board has been unable to call forth sufficient revenues from the public. A stagnant tax base and rapidly rising costs have



(Near right) Clinton school, in active use today, was built in 1868. (Far right) Blair School is 86 years old. Both schools, among many others, need modernization.



combined to place the school system in a state of sustained financial crisis. The St. Louis school board now faces a situation it was instrumental in creating, but one it now seems helpless to resolve.

Just how impotent the school board has become is evident when examining school tax and bond election results over the past decade. Between 1960 and April, 1969, 24 school and tax bond proposals were submitted to the St. Louis public, more than the total number of proposals that had been submitted in all the years before 1960. Fifteen of these 24 elections failed. Municipal support averaged 59 per cent for the nine years, dropping to 54.95 per cent in 1968 and 1969, far below the required two-thirds necessary for bond passage. This is extremely low when considering average support ranged as high as 80 per cent thirty years ago.

### Changes in the Sixties

The tables of three representative issues from the sixties demonstrate a number of factors that have become increasingly important over the past decade. Regardless of municipal turnout, election results have remained basically the same, whether 40,000, 80,000, or 120,000 voters have gone to the polls.

Moreover racial polarization in the elections of the sixties has become more and more prominent. Not only black and white voting differences by ward have been distinguishable, but also levels of support have differed in black and white precincts in racially united wards.

Proposals were passed in ten wards while failing in eighteen others. Support averaged between 55 per cent and 60 per cent. Wards 1 and 17 — Catholic wards threatened by ghetto pressure — show the lowest support. White Catholic wards 1, 6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23, and 27 show the lowest support and the highest turnout, with ward 12 accounting for nearly 6 per cent of the election total.

Black wards 5 and 19 showed support as high as 93 per cent. Black wards 4, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, and 28 also averaged support around 80 per cent. Yet, ward 19 showed the lowest turnout of around 2 per cent, and the ten wards in which the proposals passed accounted for less than 30 per cent of the total election turnout.

This pattern of high turnouts of negative white Catholic votes and low turnouts of positive black support has persisted throughout the sixties increasing in intensity over the decade.

### St. Louis Schools Face a Bleak Future

Since school tax and bond elections are increasingly decided on a racial basis, can black voters with limited white support pass any tax proposal requiring a two-thirds majority? The demographic factors of age and poverty

make this prospect very unlikely.

The age factor alone offers sufficient evidence that any such proposal has a very slim chance of receiving a two-thirds majority. Today, there are approximately 675,000 people in St. Louis, 275,000 to 285,000 of whom are black. Of the entire black population only about 150,000 are old enough to vote. Of the 380,000 to 400,000 whites in the city, 300,000 are of voting age, outnumbering the potential black vote by 2 to 1.

The greatest concentration of potential white voters is in the German Catholic centers of the city. Moreover, as of February 1969, white registered voters in the South St. Louis wards alone outnumbered black registered voters.

This means that if the entire black population were registered and 100 per cent of these 150,000 persons turned out to vote on a school bond proposal with 80 per cent or 120,000 votes in support, the white population would have to turn out only about half their strength, 140,000 voters, to defeat the bond issue.

Black voters are now registered at less than half strength; of those registered, only 25 to 35 per cent usually go to the polls. In order to pass a proposal for a moderate turnout election of 80,000 or a low turnout election of 50,000 when city support is averaging 55 per cent, would require more than an additional 20,000 or 15,000 positive votes respectively. *This means increasing black voter turnouts by 100 per cent on off-election dates or municipal election days.*

This might be accomplished if a successful registration drive were made in the black wards, and if a coordinated effort was undertaken to assure that Blacks went to the polls. If such a drive were successful, it would probably elicit a strong negative response in the white wards on the next school tax election date. White support has dipped to 30 and 20 per cent and even lower at past elections.

A series of bond proposals to raise large amounts of revenue for the school system is therefore not a feasible means to solve the financial crisis in the St. Louis schools. Whereas one bond might pass, black voting power is not sufficient to combat the white response that would likely occur on subsequent bond election days.

Unfortunately, a single bond success will bring little relief. The schools of St. Louis are in such desperate financial need that the monetary gains of a single bond proposal would be quickly erased by increasing enrollments and school costs.

Since biannual tax hikes requiring a simple majority serve only to absorb some of the rapidly rising expenditures of the system; and since St. Louis voters are willing to raise the tax rate only every other year; and since the improbability of a bond success is evident, it is clear that the St. Louis public has ceased to be an adequate source of funds.



## State and Federal Responsibility

The municipal inability to solve its own school crisis makes it the responsibility of federal and state governments. Yet in the 1965-1966 school year, with 62 per cent of its pupils living in poverty areas, St. Louis received only \$5,191,048 in Title I funds. The 1967-1968 school year received even less and amounts continue to diminish.

Including vocational and Title II funds, federal aid totaled only \$6,500,000 in 1967-1968. This accounted for only 10 per cent of expenditures and was hardly adequate to sustain the St. Louis school system. Additional federal aid does not appear to be forthcoming.

### BOND ELECTION APRIL 18, 1968

Ward	For	Against	% For	% Election Turnout
1	789	1,324	37.34	4.10
2	578	682	45.87	2.44
3	660	413	61.50	2.08
4	1,036	250	80.55	2.49
5	1,779	124	93.48	3.69
6	1,003	1,384	42.01	4.63
7	652	394	62.33	2.03
8	1,207	807	59.93	3.91
9	673	904	42.68	3.06
10	656	1,099	37.38	3.40
11	849	1,266	40.14	4.10
12	1,296	1,971	39.67	6.34
13	1,107	1,615	40.67	5.28
14	939	1,336	41.27	4.41
15	1,262	1,005	55.67	4.40
16	1,052	1,560	40.28	5.07
17	698	516	57.50	2.36
18	965	207	82.34	2.27
19	899	146	86.03	2.03
20	1,553	392	79.85	3.77
21	1,368	433	75.96	3.49
22	1,093	265	80.49	2.63
23	1,174	1,319	47.09	4.84
24	908	1,040	46.61	3.78
25	1,198	268	81.72	2.84
26	979	219	81.71	2.32
27	763	1,528	33.30	4.44
28	1,308	485	72.95	3.48

### BOND ELECTION NOVEMBER 5, 1968

1	2,596	2,990	46.47	4.20
2	2,122	1,720	55.23	2.89
3	1,389	885	61.08	1.71
4	1,570	297	84.09	1.41
5	2,853	341	89.32	2.41
6	3,305	3,300	50.04	4.98
7	1,364	778	63.68	1.61
8	3,289	1,682	66.16	3.75
9	2,413	2,165	52.70	3.45
10	2,414	2,473	49.40	3.68
11	3,072	3,096	49.81	4.65
12	3,882	4,443	46.63	6.27
13	3,768	3,718	50.33	5.64
14	3,486	3,100	52.93	4.96
15	3,548	2,246	61.24	4.37
16	3,447	3,446	50.00	5.19
17	2,701	1,286	67.75	3.00
18	1,380	259	84.20	1.23
19	1,402	124	91.87	1.15
20	2,431	814	74.92	2.44
21	2,559	759	77.12	2.50
22	1,586	422	78.98	1.51
23	3,692	3,319	52.66	5.28
24	2,914	2,568	53.16	4.13
25	3,890	863	81.84	3.58
26	1,508	338	81.69	1.39
27	2,373	3,110	43.28	4.13
28	3,388	1,389	70.92	3.60

### BOND ELECTION (Prop. 1) APRIL 1, 1969

1	1,246	2,167	36.50	4.23
2	1,188	1,333	47.12	3.12
3	828	547	60.22	1.70
4	1,330	312	81.00	2.03
5	2,168	203	91.44	2.94
6	1,569	2,098	42.79	4.54
7	1,084	635	63.05	2.13
8	2,033	1,323	60.58	4.16
9	1,183	1,477	44.47	3.30
10	1,165	1,723	40.34	3.58
11	1,418	1,911	42.60	4.13
12	1,926	2,981	39.25	6.08
13	1,661	2,520	39.73	5.18
14	1,520	2,026	42.87	4.39
15	1,970	1,560	55.81	4.37
16	1,601	2,354	40.48	4.90
17	1,444	948	60.42	2.96
18	1,265	259	83.01	1.89
19	1,419	150	90.44	1.94
20	1,887	671	73.77	3.17
21	1,828	574	76.10	2.98
22	1,192	334	78.11	1.89
23	1,740	2,335	42.78	5.05
24	1,436	1,803	44.33	4.01
25	1,956	510	79.32	3.06
26	1,216	286	80.96	1.86
27	1,199	2,181	35.47	4.19
28	1,924	821	70.09	3.40

The state government of Missouri has been even more negligent and has been exceedingly slow in responding to the changing needs of the city. Inadequate aid to both large municipal governments and large school districts is a major factor in the poverty of the St. Louis schools.

If a large scale effort were to be made to improve the educational system in St. Louis, then an equally coordinated effort would have to be made to improve poverty conditions in St. Louis. Yet, the state government stands idly by. As the Missouri Tax Study of 1968 states:

Municipal governments face a rather bleak future. Neither the state nor federal governments has displayed more than a nominal interest in assisting them financially while a shrinking revenue base and expanding expenditure needs, particularly in the two major cities, will only multiply their crucial budget problems.

## Missouri Discriminates Against City Schools

Missouri is not a poor state. In 1968 it ranked 23rd of 50 states in personal income. Yet, in 6 of 9 social service areas, Missouri was among the bottom fifteen states, and in education it ranked 39th. An examination of state expenditures demonstrates the lack of priority given to education. Not until 1965 did the State of Missouri spend as much on education as it did on highways, though the highway districts have an annual surplus of over \$1,500,000.

An even more subtle form of deprivation is keeping funds from the large school systems in Missouri. Though the large urban districts are in the most desperate need of funds, they are receiving proportionately less than the small rural districts. State aid to education averages approximately 33 per cent of expenditures for all school districts in Missouri; however, St. Louis receives only 27 per cent of its operating budget from the state.

Many school districts of over 600 are operating with insufficient funds, while the smaller districts are operating with surpluses sometimes as large as 75 per cent of their total expenditures. After observing this pattern the Missouri Tax Study of 1968 concluded:

The State Government has demonstrated a definite tendency to favor the smaller rural districts through the grant system.

State grants to school districts with over 3000 pupils account for only 28 per cent of the total general revenue but for districts with less than 3000 pupils the state provides 40 per cent of the revenues. The Tax Study further states:

When measured on a per pupil basis, where one might expect more equality in the state grant system, the larger school districts with enrollments over 3000 receive \$1.31 per pupil compared to the districts with enrollments less than 2000 who receive \$1.85 to \$1.95 per pupil.

Such discrimination is extremely harmful considering that about 62 per cent of St. Louis school children live in slum areas with over 33,000 children supported by Aid to Dependent Children. As the Board of Education reports: "These poverty areas are erratically unstable and the mobility of pupils is so great that half of them move each year. Some are enrolled in a dozen different schools each year."

## Poverty and Performance

The St. Louis Board of Education reported that for the 1967-68 school year, none of the three predominantly Black sub-school districts, Banneker, Turner, and Enright, had reached the national norm of performance in any of the three basic education skill areas of education: reading, language, and math. Of the 71,000 children living in poverty areas, 2/3 are retarded one half year or more in these three areas. In one typical poverty area the median scores

are more than a year behind national norms.

The latest HDC study showed that the total drop-out rate at the non-poverty high schools — Cleveland, Northwest, Roosevelt, Southwest, and O'Fallon Tech — is 13.11 per cent. At the poverty high schools — Beaumont, Central, McKinley, Soldan, Sumner, and Vashon — the drop-out rate is 29.33 per cent or more than twice as high.

The classrooms are overcrowded, antiquated, and understaffed. Of the 2,100 elementary classrooms, 900 have 36 or more pupils. Over 8,000 mentally retarded children are in regular classrooms because there are no proper facilities. Thirty-six of the elementary schools were built before 1900 and another 41 were constructed between 1910 and 1920.

What would it cost to improve the conditions of the St. Louis schools as estimated by the school board itself in 1968? Beginning with the ungraded primary levels 1-3, there are 34,953 pupils and a teacher ratio of 33 to 1. To reduce this ratio to 20 to 1 would require 743 additional teachers and an annual budget increase of \$5,113,326 for salaries and fringe benefits. Additional clerical help, supervisory staff, administrators, library clerks, special music and art teachers, and school nurses would add \$2,073,503 in salaries and benefits.

This reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio would require the construction of 62 twelve-room primary schools which at current costs would require \$53,630,000. In addition, plant operating costs and maintenance costs would necessitate over \$1,000,000 annually.

To reduce classes to 30 pupils per teacher from the current 34 per teacher for the 40,233 students in grades 4 through 8 would require \$1,052,946 in salaries and fringe benefits. Additional staff and administrative costs for these classes would be \$475,169 annually. The construction of six twenty-four room schools would cost \$9,900,000. Plant and operational costs would add another \$252,000 to the budget annually.

This program, over a five-year period would require \$63,530,000 for construction, and \$10,053,944 annually for faculty and maintenance, and \$1,200,000 annually for secondary school needs, bringing the five-year cost to over \$119,000,000.

To reduce pupil-teacher ratios to adequate levels, to implement building needs, and to augment school programs over a five-year period — according to a 1968 school board estimate — would cost *approximately \$200,000,000 above the annual operating budget, or \$40,000,000 a year.*

This does not include adequate health services, social services, and community programs. It does not touch upon the problems of the community in terms of adult education programs, improved curriculum, or qualified personnel to deal with ghetto problems.

These costs cover only the minimal material needs to upgrade the St. Louis educational system to a level where other improvements can be made. Yet, the St. Louis public refuses to pass bond proposals totaling \$33,710,000 and bi-annual tax raises barely cover the rapidly rising costs of the school system.

### The Alternative to Decay

Is there any way to save financially the St. Louis public schools? Municipally, it is impossible. Even if a substantial rise in the tax base of St. Louis were to occur, it could not be enough to produce the additional funds needed for the decayed school system.

The past ten years have also demonstrated that school tax and bond elections are no longer a feasible solution.

To summarize: the failure of the school tax and bond proposals is largely the result of racial and religious conflict in St. Louis. Catholic turnout is high and negative in support, black turnout is low and high in support, and

### St. Louis Cannot and Will Not Finance Its Public Schools



white Protestant vote is average in both turnout and support.

Tax raises are possible every two years, but these suffice only to meet rising expenditures. Strong, negative white response has occurred in the past when the school board requested annual tax hikes.

The passage of a bond issue would involve increasing black turnout by 100 per cent in an off-date school bond election. This feat could be done only once before the white negative response would occur on other school bond election dates, with white voters far outnumbering black voters. The funds obtained through the passage of one bond proposal would hardly touch upon the school's desperate needs.

Given these conditions, St. Louis is incapable of solving its own school crisis. Three solutions, however, are possible, of which only one can be implemented.

The first would be effective redistricting of the school systems in Missouri. Plans for such a proposal were defeated in the Missouri legislature in 1969 because of strong opposition from rural districts and suburban areas. The Post-Dispatch reported on January 11, 1969:

The proposal to reorganize Missouri's school districts has emerged as the one least likely to succeed, even before the seventy-fifth General Assembly is a week old. Rural legislators appear to be opposed generally to change. Residents of suburban areas are bombarding their legislators with vehement opposition to the dilution of their districts by merger with less affluent ones and the admission of large numbers of Negro students to their schools.

A second solution would be to lower the required two-thirds majority necessary for passage of a bond proposal to 60 or 50 per cent. (Lowering this requirement to 60 per cent would make bond passage feasible, but would not guarantee a solution. Positive support on school tax and bond elections has averaged under 60 per cent for the past ten years, and 55 per cent for the past two years, and threatens to decrease to even lower levels.)

To change the two-thirds requirement would necessitate a State Constitutional Amendment. The voters of Missouri defeated on November 5, 1968 a proposal to lower the requirement to 60 per cent, with heavy opposition to the proposal in South St. Louis. The success of such an amendment seems unlikely.

This leaves only one solution: a large increase in either state or federal aid.

The Federal Government must allocate Title I funds to St. Louis that deal realistically with the large number of poverty children attending the public schools.

State aid to education in Missouri is even more crucial. The State Government must not only make reasonable efforts to increase its aid to public education, but must take realistic measures to allocate state funds more equally and more sensibly to the large urban school districts of Missouri. If the State Government does not act, the crisis will not be solved and the St. Louis schools will degenerate into utter chaos. ◀

Gary Tobin is the author of "School Crises, Population Shifts and Voting Patterns" published by Washington University and "School Tax and Bond Election Returns 1936-1969."





## *A Portrait of St. Louis* — *As the Poor See It*

EUGENE L. BAUM

Poverty in the St. Louis metropolitan area is unique in its intense concentration in the ghettos of St. Louis City and St. Louis County.

Poverty means not merely the lack of a disposable income of \$3,100 annually, it means also little or no formal education, low social-economic-political effectiveness, inadequate housing, poor personal health, high infant mortality rates, costly consumer fraud practices, wide-spread unemployment and underemployment, and repressive community attitudes and practices.



According to the 1960 census, over 30 per cent of the families in poverty areas of the County had less than 8 years of education; and 57 per cent of all housing units were substandard in living condition.

The total St. Louis County poverty population is about evenly divided between white and black. Typically, county poverty areas are socially and economically isolated from near-by middle-class areas and lack the financial resources of business, industry, and adequate personal income. Most county poverty pockets are characterized by single family frame houses without adequate construction and sanitation. They are persistent ghettos within the boundaries of the affluent suburban socioeconomic system.

For poverty areas of the City of St. Louis, the census statistics are equally startling: 27,000 (30 per cent) families had less than a \$3,100 annual income; 119,000 (56 per cent) persons 25 and older had less than an eighth grade education, and 41,000 (33 per cent) housing units were judged substandard in living conditions.

Will it help to recite the obvious?

*Unless we have a clear picture of poverty - of the despair which pervades every aspect of human activity, and the depressing effect on society as a whole - we cannot hope for change.*

### Lack of Political Consciousness

Almost one-fourth of 42,000 families in the city and over 7 per cent or 13,000 county families were living on less than \$3,000 in 1960. The very size and concentration of the poverty population as found by researchers among distinct population segments rules out personal causes: it accuses the inequities of the past and present socioeconomic-political system.

The social causes of poverty include: exclusion of poor people (white and black) from active political power, pervasive white racism, lack of concern for the living conditions of the poor, inadequate local, state, and federal commitment to poor people, and technological advancement which has reduced the availability of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Our political system is built on a conciliation of diverse groups which form the basis of political power. Goods and services are distributed in accordance with the power of each interest or combination of interests. Only lately have poor people begun to recognize their common interest. Hitherto, they have rarely been effectively organized into voting blocks, and they have had a low political participation rate. The poverty population lacks the monetary and social leadership resources necessary to deal effectively in the political system. As a result, local, state and federal laws, regulations, and programs have disproportionately favored the interests of other groups to the detriment of low income people.

### Bias Intensifies Poverty

Racism has always deterred black people from finding adequate jobs. Employment discrimination in the St. Louis metropolitan area has shown the devastating effects of bias. Recent urban unrest and segregationist political figures capitalizing on fear have contributed to the lower- and middle-class white's misconception that he will be replaced in his job by a black man.

The absence of a fair housing law in St. Louis County; continued employment discrimination by many businesses and unions; limited welfare assistance to families without a male head; lack of social agencies which serve persons of low income and particularly blacks; weak existing consumer protection laws; and the lack of low income housing for large families particularly in the county are a few indications of the local government's and legislature's lack of concern for the misery of the poor.

### Poverty Begets Poor Health

*St. Louis had the highest over-all reported death rate for the years 1960 to 1964 of major cities in the nation. The 1967 St. Louis City annual Health Report stated that St. Louis has the sixth highest death rate among cities due to its lead in each of six top diseases, and is the second highest in the country in infant death rate per 1000 live births.*

Inadequate levels of health care are intimately tied into the cycle of poverty-begetting-poverty. People in a state of poor physical and/or mental health, lacking the financial and educational means to seek high quality professional care, cannot be expected to be qualified or highly motivated to upgrade themselves. The indigent person almost never benefits from a single point of access to a complete array of health services for himself or his family. Nor may he benefit from a personal relationship between himself and a sympathetic physician. Instead, he encounters a confusing and discouraging shuttling about and referral from one fragment of service to another, must wait in public waiting rooms for periods that measure in hours, and in the end, submits to impersonal and impatient handling from medical professionals who themselves are rushed and overworked. Comprehensive Health Centers for all citizens are essential.

Such obstacles, combined with little education in health, keep the poor from seeking professional care except when severe illness necessitates it, and then it is often too late for effective treatment.

### The Housing Jungle

For most large cities, the over-all movement of the black population from the rural communities to the urban areas has greatly accelerated and has been more marked than that for the white population. St. Louis City is rapidly becoming a predominantly Negro area. While great percentages of whites in St. Louis have moved to the county, Negroes have increasingly concentrated in the inner city. The 1960 census found about 36 per cent of St. Louis City to be black. A realistic estimate would put the present percentage of Negroes at about 45 per cent, with the majority of the population becoming black about 1970 or 1972, according to the Model City Agency of St. Louis. Causes of the population shift include discriminatory housing practices and restrictive zoning laws in the County of St. Louis, which reduce the opportunity for Negro residence and effectively limit or prohibit development of low income housing.

About 50,000 standard dwellings are needed in the City and County of St. Louis for low-income families. With the population increase in the city being felt most acutely by low income dwellers, the need for decent low income housing has increased at a marked rate.

From 1960 to 1965, losses to the housing inventory in the city have totaled over 12,000, virtually all due to urban renewal and highways. Of the City's 257,000 housing units, 18 per cent (46,000) were considered substandard, compared with 7 per cent in the total St. Louis County area. From 1965 to 1967, 3,100 units were scheduled for demolition by various public agencies in the City, and another 300 in the County. An additional 1,400 units were estimated to be lost by fire, conversion to non-residential use, and other losses. Of the 2,600 units under construction, 1,550 are high rise with rents from \$130 to \$350 per month and the remainder garden-type developments ranging between \$100 and \$160 per month.

From April 1967 to April 1968, 2,700 families were estimated to have been displaced by urban renewal, highways, and code enforcement. While about 1,500 of these families were estimated to earn below \$3,000, only 200 units of public housing were estimated available for relocation. As a result, from 1,500 to 2,500 low income families are being displaced annually with public housing available



only to about 10 to 20 per cent of these families. The problem is particularly severe for the county's large low income family, due to zoning restrictions. However, in both the city and county poverty areas there are large numbers of vacant and vandalized homes which could be rehabilitated or demolished to make room for new construction.

### Officials Avoid Commitments

Local, state, and federal programs and budgets generally tend to perpetuate poverty. *The state of Missouri ranks 41st in quantity and quality of social and welfare services.* This ranking was made in January 1968, in a report of the Midwest Research Institute prepared upon request from the Missouri State Senate. The report concluded that Missouri offers a very low level of social welfare services to its residents — not because the state is financially unable to remedy the situation but because of the "apparent unwillingness of the (more affluent) residents of the State to provide sufficient resources to the public sector!" Missouri ranks 45th in per capita general expenditures per \$1,000 of personal income and 46th in actual tax collections as a per cent of yield under a representative tax system.

The main instrument of national economic policy, that is, the federal budget, does not define the ending of poverty as a national priority need. As at the state level, expenditures and tax programs are not primarily used to alleviate poverty.

Indeed, our welfare system and similar institutions help to perpetuate some conditions of poverty in our country. Specifically, those workers not covered by minimum wage laws, those out of work through no fault of their own, our older citizens, injured workers, and families on general welfare are — by regulation — in poverty.

Older citizens need assistance to maintain a bare livelihood in the United States. Inflation hits the older people and pensioners the hardest. Old age insurance and pensions must be increased substantially to correspond with wages and prices if the extent of institutionally imposed poverty is to be reduced. Similarly, workmen's compensation for injury reimbursements is usually at about the poverty level of subsistence.

Perhaps one of the greatest limitations on lifting thousands out of poverty is the pitifully low level of public assistance to broken families in need and families headed by women who cannot work because of children. Along with a raise in aid, a workable and appropriate system of incentives (such as an opportunity for increasing income through employment in private industry, or the government, as the employer of last resort) must be provided. Laws must also provide for families which do not contain adults capable of being trained and employed to the point of self-sufficiency.

### Job Opportunities Still Restricted

Much is made of providing opportunity for people to get off the relief rolls. In reality, skill training, adult education, and placement opportunities for poverty area youth and adults, who usually lack a long work history and a high school diploma are minimal. Existing programs combining skill training and adult education actually accommodate less than 1,500 persons annually in St. Louis.

*The St. Louis Central City had the highest annual 1967 unemployment rate for blacks (approximately 13 per cent) of all of the 14 largest poverty areas in the United States,* as determined from household surveys conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But the average unemployment rate for 14 central cities was 4.7 per cent, according to the findings of the Division of Employment and Unemployment Analysis of the BLS, published in the May 1968 issue of *Monthly Labor Review*.

St. Louis was also among the four areas in the country

### A Poverty Portrait of St. Louis

- St. Louis has the highest unemployment rate for Negroes of any of the nation's 20 largest poverty areas.
- St. Louis white unemployment rate was approximately equal to the highest in the country.
- The St. Louis metropolitan area has the fastest increasing food prices.
- St. Louis is among the six cities highest in death rates due to major diseases.
- St. Louis is second highest in the nation in: infant death rate per 1000 live births; death rates for influenza, pneumonia, and diseases of early infancy.
- St. Louis' predominantly Negro sub-school districts are below national norm levels in all basic skill areas.
- St. Louis' predominantly Negro high schools have a dropout rate about 220 per cent greater than predominantly white high schools.
- St. Louis does not abide by federal or its own Equal Employment laws. Thirty-eight per cent of its 1,516 largest metropolitan industries had no Negro workers.
- St. Louis's skilled Blacks are not welcome at almost two-thirds of these large employers.
- Missouri ranks 41st in quantity and quality of social and welfare services.

which did not reflect the nationwide trend toward higher employment between 1960 and 1967. Non-whites had higher unemployment rates than whites in all areas surveyed. However, *our central city white unemployment rate was approximately equal to the highest in the country.* The core city of St. Louis is the worst unemployment center in the nation for black people and about equal to the worst area for white people.

The 1967 BLS survey of the St. Louis central city also offers the first figures on the extent of sub-employment — low wage level, limited-time employment, workers looking for jobs but not registered with MSES, and those just having given up trying to find a job — a "startling, sobering, 38.9 per cent."

The high rate of unemployment and underemployment is caused by (1) lack of adult education and employment training programs available to low-income persons, who are faced with demands for higher education and skill requirements for jobs; (2) lack of available machine-training and vestibule-training positions; (3) continued discrimination by unions and industry; (4) inadequate education for ghetto youth; (5) unnecessarily high and rigid job requirements such as the demand of a high school diploma; and (6) inaccessibility of job locations.

Especially, the past reluctance of some of the largest employers to hire any Blacks has been a prime contributor toward making this the city with the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report, conducted with the support of the St. Louis Council on Human Relations, found 38 per cent of our 1,516 largest industries had no Negro workers, and 62 per cent of these same companies had no Negro in any skilled job.

### Schooling Is Inferior

The predominantly black sub-districts in St. Louis are scenes of low achievement and high drop-out rates. The Board of Education's Research and Evaluation Department reported to HDC in August of 1968 that for the 1966-67 school year *none of any of the three predominantly Negro*

sub-school districts in St. Louis (Banneker, Enright, Turner) had reached national norm levels in any of the basic skill areas (reading, language, and arithmetic). Although the rate of increase in achievement is accelerating, even the Banneker district — a national lighthouse of inner city innovation — has yet to reach national achievement norm levels.

Another difficulty in poverty area high schools is the tremendous drop-out rate. According to Board of Education statistics: *predominantly black high schools have a drop-out rate 220 per cent greater than predominantly white secondary schools.*

The St. Louis City and County educational needs include pre-school and day care programs, adult education opportunities, and greatly expanded compensatory education programs in poverty areas. The 1960 census indicates that for St. Louis City there were about 450,000 persons 25 years old and over of which *more than 7,000 have never attended school*, more than 33,000 who have less than five years of formal education, more than 86,000 who have up to a ninth grade education, and more than 380,000 who have not completed high school.

### Consumers Deceived

*A recent survey of merchandizing in the central city area found practices which were also noted by the Federal Trade Commission in its Consumer Protection Program. Widespread questionable practices exist in the selling of appliances and furniture. Helping people overcome their loss of legal recourse when their "paper" is sold to a finance company, and reducing the garnishee action which may lead to a loss of a job, are examples of how poor people are kept in a state of continual indebtedness and job insecurity. Commonly found deceptive retailing routines include: bait and switch advertising, false and misleading statements, failure to reveal full amount of purchase price and financing charges, deceptive pricing and misrepresentation of regular prices, selling used merchandise as new, fictitious wholesale price lists, refusal to give itemized bills, and failure to disclose terms regarding refund of deposits.*

These practices exist in the city and county poverty areas, as we know from reports by the Civil Legal Aid Society, Legal Services Program, Neighborhood Action Program, Social Services Program, food pricing surveys con-

ducted by the Research Department, and the H.D.C.

And, since about one-third of the poverty family's budget is spent on food, rapidly increasing food prices hit the poor family the hardest.

*The St. Louis metropolitan area has the fastest increasing food prices of major metropolitan areas in the country. The Monthly Labor Review of October 1968 states that for each of the past eight months, St. Louis area residents have been the victims of the fastest increasing food prices of major metropolitan areas. The problem is continually reflected in 1969 data. The area's rate of increase was 4 per cent faster than the national average increase of food prices, just for the month of August 1968.*

The rapid increase in consumer prices, coupled with food prices which are higher in some inner city stores than in more affluent areas, further lowers the level of nutrition available to poor families.

### The Balance Sheet

A 1967 Human Development Corporation household survey of randomly selected citizens corroborates the census indication of the large percentage of families with low annual incomes: *over 7 per cent reported less than \$1,000 annual family income, 37 per cent reported incomes of less than \$3,000, 75 per cent of the sample reported total family incomes of less than \$5,000.*

The Human Development Corporation interviews each individual coming into any Neighborhood Station for basic socio-demographic data. HDC registered 18,270 applicants for services in the St. Louis City and County poverty areas from July 1967 to March 1968. Of all registered clients during this nine-month span:

80%	were Negro
24%	had less than 9th grade education
72%	had less than a 12th grade education
70%	have been in this area 10 years or more
93%	have resided at their present address less than one year
70%	were looking for work (or these 36% were unable to find work)
56%	report their most recent job as being clerical or service in nature
5%	have a physical disability.

The poor have little money, they are unemployed, undereducated, and live with rapidly increasing food prices. Not only white racism, insufficient schooling, high disease rates, poor housing, and employer resistance to hiring blacks, but also inadequate governmental commitment to solving the condition of poverty are responsible. Local, state, and federal budgets should be the foremost instruments to spearhead a long-range drive to eliminate poverty. So far governmental budgets do not allocate sufficient funds and officials are not planning to marshal American economic and moral resources for an effective attack. It must be admitted that existing programs have had no visible effect because few have advanced beyond the experimental and planning stage. The prospects for changing this policy of procrastination are dim, indeed. ◀



# Did the Rent Strike Succeed?

PHILLIP THIGPEN

The rent strike by St. Louis public housing tenants was triggered by an increase in rents, but the new rents alone cannot explain the tenacity and cohesion of the strikers nor the substantial community support for the strike. The more pervasive causes are the miserable level of income of the tenants with no relief in sight, the tenants' awakening sense of "citizen power," and the rising cost of living. They want to participate in shaping their lives; individually weak, collectively they reinforce each others' aspirations and publicly agitate for change.

The strike has ended. Has it been successful as many of the strike leaders claim? A new set of decision makers has come into power. It matters, of course, who makes the decisions at the local level, but the disparity between the continually rising costs of running public housing, and the reduction in the ability of tenants to pay adequate rents promises new crises in the absence of state or federal aid.

The "victory" was less substantial than it appears on the surface, because the ultimate remedy cannot come from local decision makers.

A review of the public housing controversy will show that the local change of the guard cannot be more than a beginning.

## Increase Triggers Strike

In October of 1968, the St. Louis Housing Authority announced a schedule of rent increases; shortly after the announcement, talk of a rent strike began.

The Housing Authority's new rent schedule provided that each month one-twelfth of public housing tenants were to be reviewed and a new schedule of rent increases ranging from \$3.00 to \$19.00 was to be put into effect: for some tenants, 70 to 80 per cent of their total annual income would go to housing. One year and one rent strike later, the rent increases were suspended.

But the strikers' goal was much larger. Strike leaders demanded that the St. Louis Housing Authority charge no more than 25 per cent of a tenant's income for rent. There were other demands, but the central issue was the inability to pay rent and to obtain the other necessities of life from a very meager welfare allotment.

When the strike began two thirds of the tenants — about 7,000 families (5 per cent of the City's population) — received all or part of their incomes from welfare payments. The average tenant income was a little less than \$3,000 per year. About 40 per cent of the tenants were receiving less than \$2,500 per year. Yet, when the Blumeyer Apartments were opened, the rents were set by the Authority's Board of Commissioners on the basis of the space or size of the apartment rather than the income of the tenant. Elderly tenants, however, remained on an income basis and were charged less than the other tenants.

At the time, the lowest rent charged was \$42.00 per month, which included all utilities (heat, hot water, electri-

city, gas) and a range and refrigerator. The Housing Authority received a net rent of about \$27.00 per month after paying for utilities. The highest rent charged was \$97.00 per month for a five-bedroom apartment, which gave the Housing Authority a net rent of about \$62.00 per month.

Except for Blumeyer, the average operating cost is \$55 per month, which means that the Authority operated at a deficit in most cases.

## Missouri Starves Aid Recipients

Under the title of "The Role of Public Welfare in Housing," the Department of Health, Education and Welfare issued a Report to the Congress last year which shows that the minimum monthly cost standards set by Missouri for a family of, say, a mother and three children is \$304 per month. The payment by the state to such a family is \$124 or about 44 per cent of its minimum needs. If she lived in public housing and paid the minimum \$73 per month for a three-bedroom apartment, *she would have left 38¢ per day for each member of her family.* She is expected to provide all of the essentials — food, clothing, etc. — from the remaining \$1.50 per day. (In New Jersey the same family could receive as much as \$248 per month, plus a rental allowance.)

The Missouri General Assembly failed to resolve the St. Louis rent strike by providing the necessary funds to meet the Authority's deficit and pay in part the rent for some of the poorest tenants. An attempt was made — the Troupe-Simon rent subsidy bill — and met with defeat. Unlike the city and the federal government, the state makes no contribution at all.

The Federal Government adamantly refused to subsidize the Housing Authority. Federal law requires the Housing Authority to pay the costs of operating from its rental income: this was the law before the strike and remains so today. The operating costs include such items as the cost of custodial and maintenance services, all replacements such as refrigerators and ranges, all repairs, and numerous other expenses and management costs.

The people living in public housing do not have the money to pay adequate rents; the Authority does not have the money to maintain public housing without such rents. While the fear of crime is a serious concern, the Housing Authority can no longer afford to provide security guards. The windows and elevators remain broken for longer periods of time.

## Demand Tenant Control

With no relief in sight and aware that the incumbent housing board members had run out of proposals, the strikers demanded — among other things — a share in policy-making authority. They made it clear that officials could no longer remain insensitive to the wishes of the residents.

Traditionally, the ghettos have been under the control of

individual leaders and small groups none of whom live in the ghetto. On the other hand, the making of public policy elsewhere in the cities has been subject as Washington once said to "various passions," all of which seemed to be local in nature.

Today the machinery for decision-making appears to be headed in the opposing direction. While groups such as the St. Louis rent strike leaders strongly advocate the establishment of local control of neighborhood institutions, there are others who talk of expanding city government to a metropolitan level.

Over the years we have developed a bureaucratic management system which seems impersonal and insensitive to the will of the public housing resident. This system impedes their ability to bring about meaningful change. It has developed over the years, and power has been masked in such a way, and to such a degree that it is not responsive to normal political processes. The resultant effect is that public housing is under attack and new approaches to management are being proposed.

Identification of actors and their roles in public life has made it possible, in the past, for Americans to redress their grievances, and so to avoid irreconcilable confrontations. But for the average St. Louis tenant in the public housing projects, because power was distributed widely, it was impossible to identify the decision makers. This decentralization worked as an institutional constraint on effective change. Strike leaders recognized that power must not only be given to tenants but also must be centralized to implement hoped-for changes.

Power, the strikers learned, is not readily given. Their aspirations put them on a collision course with local, state, and federal officials. Access to decision making was so fundamental that it overshadowed all other demands. They did not have to read a study by Harold Baron, in the November 1968 issue of *Trans-action*, which documents the powerless-

## Rents in St. Louis Public Housing

Gross Rent Including Utilities	Net Rent Without Utilities	
\$42 to \$70	\$27 to \$55	One bedroom
\$55 to \$75	\$35 to \$55	Two bedrooms
\$73 to \$87	\$48 to \$62	Three bedrooms
\$80 to \$92	\$50 to \$62	Four bedrooms
\$89 to \$97	\$54 to \$62	Five bedrooms

ness of black people in the political and economic structure. "After failing to bring about major change (in the City of Chicago), many Negroes realized that one reason why the status quo in housing, jobs, and education continues, is that the black community lacks control over decision making." Baron comes to the conclusion that the more powerful the post, the fewer black policy makers.

## The Resolution of the Strike

The strike did end, of course, and a new Board has been appointed. The settlement was arranged by the Civic Alliance for Housing, a group composed of tenant strike leaders as well as local business, church, labor, and community leaders.

The settlement provided for: (a) a new five-man Housing Authority Board of Commissioners of which two members are to be public housing tenants, and (b) a tenant affairs board composed of representatives from each project, eventually to be replaced by an elected board. The representatives have been selected from participants in the strike. It is planned to pay each member a salary of \$6,000 per year.

Harold J. Gibbons, Chairman of the Board and the person most responsible for the changes which have taken place, considers \$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000 necessary to be raised by private sources if some of the immediate problems are to be resolved. Ronald R. Friedman, director of development for the Housing Authority, sees a need for \$50 million "just to put the housing projects into reasonable living condition. Fifty million dollars is 10 times the Authority's annual operating budget." It takes three times more than all of the Federal money anticipated for all public housing in St. Louis, plus local resources and support, to attain the goal of a decent, safe, and sanitary home just for the residents who live in Pruitt Igoe.

The question remains, whether tenant control of public housing can bring about changes. While this question is debated, more and more of the buildings are being abandoned by impoverished families who are choosing the discomforts of substandard housing over the insecurity of project life.

Officials and tenants must mount an attack on the federal law which creates the housing problem. It is this task, and not only a change in local leadership, that is necessary for real and long-range improvements.

Unless we can commit ourselves to this task, the only alternative may be a complete abandonment of the traditional public housing program. After all, tenants are doing it every day. ◀

Phillip Thigpen has recently resigned as executive assistant to, the executive director of the Land Clearance Authority. Thigpen took a position with a real estate development and construction firm and will study for a doctorate in business administration at Indiana University after he received his master's degree in urban affairs at St. Louis University in January. He came from Newark, N.J., in March 1967 to be manager of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex. He was later Northside developments supervisor for the Housing Authority and became an aid to the executive director of the combined public housing and urban renewal agencies in 1968.

## ERAIN

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